

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims

1. – 46. (Canceled)

47. (New) A method of selecting an avatar, comprising the steps of:

maintaining a database of records, each record comprising attributes of an individual and an identifier of said individual;

receiving a plurality of input attributes from a user for selecting records from the database;

rendering a first avatar based on the plurality of input attributes, wherein a graphical user interface builds up the image of the first avatar as the plurality of input attributes are received;

selecting and retrieving at least one record from the database based on the plurality of input attributes;

rendering at least one second avatar using attributes comprised in the at least one retrieved record; and

selecting a rendered second avatar.

48. (New) The method as claimed in Claim 47, further comprising the additional step of sending a message to the individual who corresponds to the identifier of the selected rendered second avatar.

49. (New) The method as claimed in Claim 47, wherein the plurality of input attributes comprise attributes relating to a location of an individual.

50. (New) The method as claimed in Claim 47, wherein the plurality of input attributes include details of an individual's physical appearance.

51. (New) The method as claimed in Claim 50, wherein the details of an individual's physical appearance are selected from a list consisting of head shapes, eye colors, eyelid states, mouth types, hairstyles, hair colors, skin colors, breast size, belly size and clothing.

52. (New) The method as claimed in Claim 51, wherein the clothing is selected from a list consisting of top style, top color, bottom style, bottom color, shoe type and shoe color.

53. (New) The method as claimed in Claim 47, wherein the plurality of input attributes include details of an individual's behavior.

54. (New) The method as claimed in Claim 53, wherein the details of an individual's behavior are selected from a list consisting of smoking preference, drink preference, musical preference, and interests.

55. (New) The method of claim 47, wherein the step of selecting and retrieving at least one record from the database based on the plurality of input attributes comprises selecting and retrieving a plurality of records from the database, wherein the step of rendering at least one second avatar comprises rendering a plurality of second avatars, wherein each second avatar corresponds to a different one of the selected and retrieved records, and wherein the step of selecting a rendered second avatar comprises selecting one of the plurality of second avatars.

56. (New) The method of claim 55, further comprising the step of sending a message to the individual who corresponds to the identifier of the selected second avatar.

57. (New) A system for selecting an avatar, comprising:

a database that stores a plurality of records, each record comprising attributes of an individual and an identifier of said individual;

a character engine that receives a plurality of input attributes from a user for selecting records from the database, wherein the character engine comprises a graphical user interface that includes a first avatar, and wherein the character engine further comprises a rendering module for rendering the first avatar based on the received plurality of input attributes,

wherein the graphical user interface and the rendering module allow a user to build up the image of the first avatar, and wherein the character engine selects and retrieves at least one record from the database based on the received plurality of input attributes; and

an avatar rendering and selection module that renders at least one second avatar using attributes in the at least one retrieved record and that allows a user to select a rendered second avatar.

58. (New) The system as claimed in Claim 57, further comprising a sending module that sends a message to the individual who corresponds to the identifier of the selected rendered second avatar.

59. (New) The system as claimed in Claim 57, wherein the plurality of input attributes comprise attributes relating to a location of an individual.

60. (New) The system as claimed in Claim 57, wherein the plurality of input attributes include details of an individual's physical appearance

61. (New) The system as claimed in Claim 60, wherein the details of an individual's physical appearance are selected from a list consisting of head shapes, eye colors, eyelid states, mouth types, hairstyles, hair colors, skin colors, breast size, belly size and clothing.

62. (New) The system as claimed in Claim 61, wherein the clothing is selected from a list consisting of top style, top color, bottom style, bottom color, shoe type and shoe color.

63. (New) The system as claimed in Claim 57, wherein the plurality of input attributes include details of an individual's behavior.

64. (New) The system as claimed in Claim 63, wherein the details of an individual's behaviour are selected from a list consisting of smoking preference, drink preference, musical preference, and interests.

65. (New) The system as claimed in claim 57, wherein the character engine selects and retrieves a plurality of records from the database based on the received plurality of input attributes, wherein the avatar rendering and selection module renders a plurality of second avatars, each second avatar corresponding to a different one of the plurality of selected and retrieved records, and wherein the avatar rendering and selection module also allows a user to select one of the plurality of second avatars.

66. (New) The system as claimed in Claim 65, further comprising a sending module that sends a message to the individual who corresponds to the identifier of the selected second avatar.